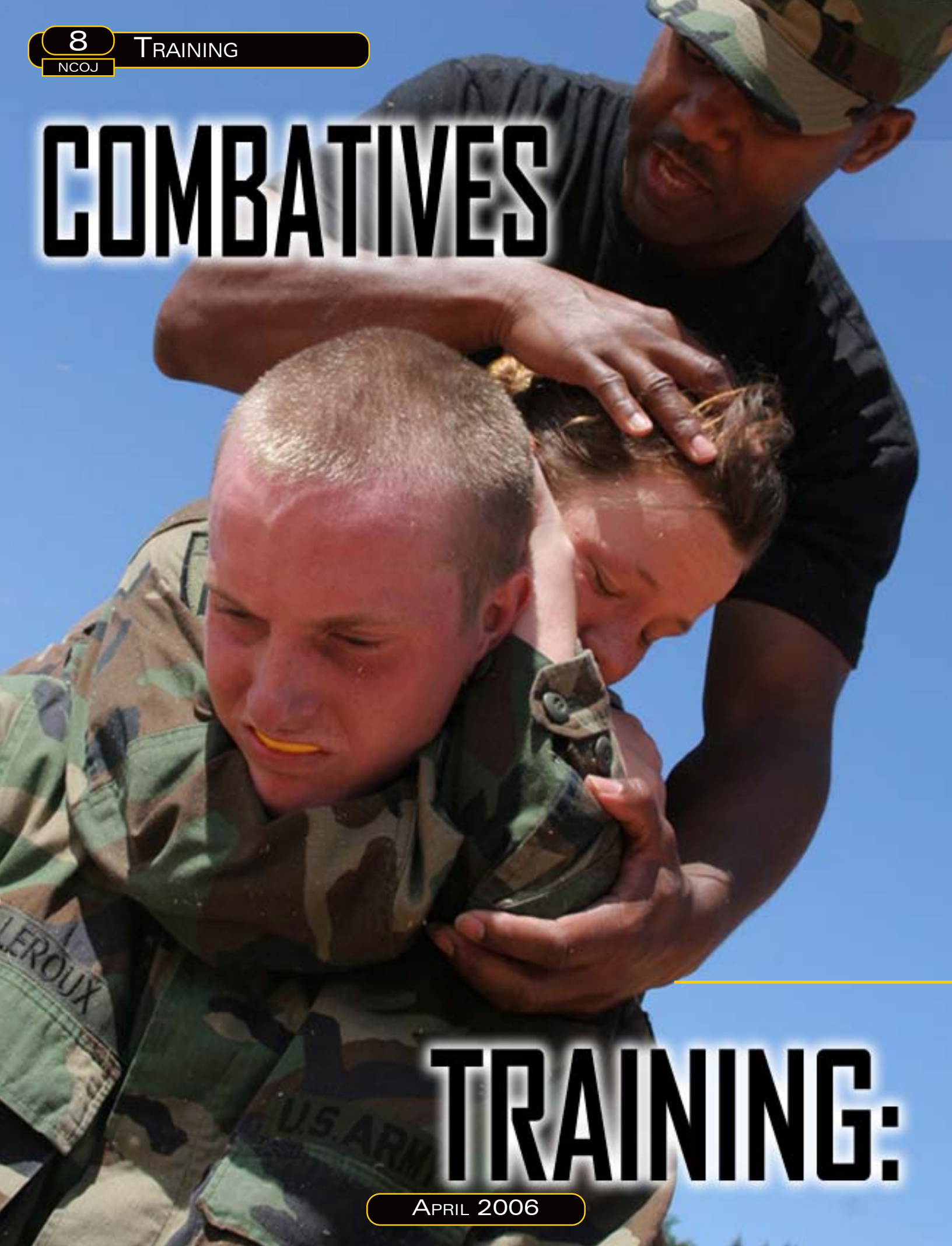


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TRAINING

COMBATIVES



TRAINING:

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Up close and personal

By Sgt. 1st Class Krishna M. Gamble

In today's Army, all Soldiers are warriors first. For many, the idea of being an infantryman is not part of their normal military occupational specialty. But with an Army embroiled in urban conflicts as part of the Global War on Terrorism, there is a need for all Soldiers to be better prepared to fight and survive on the battlefield.

To help ensure all Soldiers are warriors first regardless of MOS, the Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker has mandated that all Soldiers receive combatives training.

Hand-to-hand combatives training, based on wrestling, boxing and several forms of martial arts including Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, Muay Thai and Kali, teaches Soldiers not only how to fight, but also how to react in stressful situations. It also enables those who are not physically intimidating to be able to hold their own against larger or stronger opponents.

"During the latest combat operations in Iraq, we have heard of attempts to kidnap Soldiers and Soldiers being separated from their unit during an ambush," said Command Sgt. Maj. David Davenport, squadron command sergeant major, 1st Squadron, 1st United States Cavalry, 1st Armored Division, Buding, Germany. "Combatives provides the Soldier with the mental calmness and situational awareness in order to defend themselves."

Military operations in areas of Iraq and Afghanistan where the use of deadly weapons is restricted, presented a challenge for Soldiers when an unexpected confrontation occurred. According to Army officials, Soldiers returning from operations in theater reported they received little or no hand-to-hand combatives training and that there was a need for a program to enable them to accept the challenge of restricted-weapons use and deal with the civilian communities.

"The same Soldiers who raced across the desert and captured Baghdad almost immediately switched to stability and support operations," said Matt Larsen, director of Modern Army



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Richard A. Spry

Staff Sgt. Bryan Smith instructs Spc. Bobbie Nemo and Pfc. Andrew Poarch on proper combatives techniques during training at Fort Carson, Colo.

Combatives, Fort Benning, Ga. "Our training plan must teach Soldiers to handle both types of operational environments."

Combatives is a system of fighting intended for use when weapons are not available or when their use is not advisable. Soldiers may never need to use combatives techniques in actual combat, but every Soldier should receive training in this fighting style. Every Soldier must be prepared to engage and destroy an enemy in close contact, Larsen said, adding, "It's all about the Warrior Ethos. Not every Soldier will [encounter] and destroy an enemy in close combat, but the defining characteristic of a warrior is the willingness to close with the enemy."

"Army combatives training is one of the best ways to tangibly build a warrior," said Command Sgt. Maj. James Pippin, battalion command sergeant major, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade, Fort Bliss, Texas. "In the end, tanks don't win wars, guns don't win wars. Soldiers win wars."

The modern Army combatives program began in 1995 with the 2nd Ranger Battalion, Fort Benning, Ga., and was adopted by the 11th Infantry Regiment in 1999. After receiving positive

PRACTICE HURTS

A member of the cadre reinforces a point about choke holds during combatives training during Warrior Forge, Fort Lewis, Wash. Even a choke hold inexpertly applied can hurt, as the tension in Cadet Justin Leroux's face shows (foreground).

Photo by Al Zdarsky

feedback from the Soldiers involved, the program was incorporated into Army Field Manual 3-25.150. It is currently being introduced to the Army as a whole per guidance from Schoomaker, calling for combatives training to be “conducted regularly, posted on unit training schedules and executed at company- or platoon-level.”

“[Every Soldier is] to experience the physical and emotional demands of hand-to-hand fighting prior to engaging in conflict,” Schoomaker said in a memo to all Army commands, the Army Reserve and National Guard.

The training program is taught on four skill levels each designed to not only expand individual fighting skills, but also enhance the teaching aspects of combatives.

“Combatives training is battle-focused training in the fundamentals of hand-to-hand combat, providing [Soldiers] the needed skills to build confidence and the ability to fight, survive and win on the modern battlefield,” said Sgt. 1st Class Charles Abbey, platoon sergeant, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment Fort Benning, Ga. “It will provide realistic training to Soldiers on how to deal with hostile persons in situations that do not require the use of deadly force but do require the use of physical force.”

Each level of training teaches Soldiers how to use physical force to subdue their opponent regardless of size. Level I is a one-week course designed to teach basic combatives techniques. Level I-qualified instructors can teach the basic combatives drills and tasks (see graph on next page). Level II is a two-week course tailored to teach advanced techniques, teaching methodologies and philosophies. Designed to integrate fighting skills into the infantry battle drills and close-quarters battle, Level III is a four-week course. The fourth level is also a four-week course that teaches management skills, focusing on how to design, manage, execute and promote a safe combatives program throughout the installation.

“Soldiers need this training [because] it builds confidence in the Soldier’s ability to handle hand-to-hand combat situations encountered on the battlefield,” Abbey said. “It also [builds] character [and] instills the fighting spirit and warrior ethos.”

Courage, confidence and the warrior spirit are not the only benefits to the Soldier, Davenport said. Improved physical fitness, unit cohesion and team building are also evident in units where combatives training has been added.



Photo by Spc. Michael J. Taylor

In the Giebelstadt (Germany) Army Airfield gymnasium, Staff Sgt. Mark Dominik referees a match during the tournament portion of a five-day Modern Army Combatives course for Soldiers of V Corps’ 69th Air Defense Artillery Brigade earlier this month. The course provided the brigade with the first troops in U.S. Army Europe to be certified as instructors in the new form of hand-to-hand combat.

Skill Level I Basics

Stand In Base
Escape the Mount, Trap and Roll
Pass the Guard
Side Control
Achieve the Mount from Side Control
Escape the Mount, Shrimp to the Guard
Arm Push and Roll to the Rear Mount
Escape the Rear Mount
Rear Naked Choke
Cross Collar Choke from the Mount and Guard
The Bent Arm Bar (Mount and Side Control)
The Straight Arm Bar from the Mount
The Straight Arm Bar from the Guard
Sweep from the Attempted Straight Arm Bar
Scissors Sweep



"It has not only taught our Soldiers the necessary skills in order to defend themselves, but also provided a team-building event that has led to cohesive small-unit fire teams and squads, developed the physical and mental toughness needed in combat, and a higher level of esprit de corps amongst the Soldiers," he said.

"It's the building blocks of the Warriors Ethos ... a great physical fitness regimen, a lot better than extend to the left, etc. etc.," said Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony Aubain, command sergeant major U.S. Army Combined Arm Support Command and Fort Lee, Va.

"This training has definitely been a morale booster. I think the training has been a definite asset to our unit because it provides you with an additional means to defend yourself, your 'Battle-Buddy,' and thereby your unit, mission, country," said Sgt. 1st Class Carlinda Andrews, 710th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light), Fort Drum, N.Y. "Soldiers are anxious to learn all they can in order to feel confident in their combat ability."

As effective as this training has been and is projected to be for the future force, there are several challenges each unit faces when implementing the training. Time and availability of school slots are concerns of unit leaders with high operation tempos. But the potential for injury is the most common concern.

"We have put in a lot of safety measures to stop injuries [and] they have been very effective. We usually only have injuries during the Level I certification but they have been minor," said Staff Sgt. Antonio Lynn, combatives instructor for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 23rd Quartermaster Brigade, Fort Lee, Va.

"There are going to be some injuries. There's a risk of injury in all training we do," said Command Sgt. Maj. Cory McCarty, command sergeant major for Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth, Kan. "We must take every single [precaution] we can to make sure we don't hurt anybody."

Another challenge is overcoming fear. Not necessarily fear of injury or a new task, but fear of embarrassment. It is possible

for the flexible, thinner person to make the larger, more rigid person submit, Aubain said.

"It doesn't matter your height and weight. It's not all about muscle," he said. "It's the technique. Just relax and use the technique."

"You will get your [butt] kicked... you will definitely be sore, bruised and beaten during the training and conditioning phase," Andrews said. "It is really intense physically, even just learning how to fall correctly, and after falling or being flipped about 60 times or so, it really makes you wonder if you're really that 'steely-eyed killer' you thought you were — and that's just Day 1."

And it's not the size of the individual that causes fear, but the rank structure. All NCOs from sergeant to command sergeant major need to be actively involved in combatives training, Pippin said.

"Too often senior NCOs are afraid [of embarrassment] so they don't get involved, but it's okay if Pvt. Smedley makes me tap out or makes me submit," he said. "The bottom line is if senior NCOs take an interest in it, it will spread like wildfire. Taking an interest in it means getting into it and getting your hands dirty with your troops."

Pippin also said that Soldiers who still have the pre-war attitude that they are never going to be in a fight need to realize that "every Soldier is a warrior."

"In the end, the Army's mission is to kill aggressors of the United States and that doesn't just mean [its the job of] the combat arms. It means the whole Army machine — all warriors."

In the past five years, more than 10,000 Soldiers were certified in training combatives to others and thousands more will train by 2007.

"Since combat is not a push-up competition, combatives are designed for not only physical fitness but mental readiness, confidence, and endurance that prepare Soldiers to endure the harsh realities of the modern battlefield," Davenport said.

For more information about combatives, visit <http://www.moderncombatives.org>.